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Sociale wetenschappen en hun speelruimte. Een onderzoek naar de relatie tussen wetenschap en maatschappij aan de hand van ontwikkelingen in de onderwijssociologie en het politieke debat over ongelijke onderwijskansen.

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Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

1986

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Harbers, J. A. (1986). *Sociale wetenschappen en hun speelruimte. Een onderzoek naar de relatie tussen wetenschap en maatschappij aan de hand van ontwikkelingen in de onderwijssociologie en het politieke debat over ongelijke onderwijskansen.* s.n.

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Sociologists do not only write about society but are also part of that society. This 'double bond' has far-reaching consequences on the development of their scientific field. A great number of philosophical debates on the principles of the social sciences has been devoted to this issue. Actual empirical research into that double bond, however, has been far less extensive. This study makes up for the lack of such research by giving an account of a historical-sociological inquiry into the development of sociology of education in the Netherlands.

Special attention is paid to the 'Talentenproject' (Project on Talents), a research into the causes of unequal educational opportunities carried out in the sixties and led by Van Heek, a sociologist from the university of Leiden. It is one of the few sociological researches ever to be carried out on such a large scale in the Netherlands. In this project issues initially only discussed in political and public terms now became the subject of scientific debate. This study examines how the sociologist of education became involved in the public debate on inequality and what have since been the changes in the relationship between science and politics.

On the basis of the findings in this case-study the relationship between internal scientific and external social developments can now be historically specified. How are scientific form and public function of the social sciences related and what changes occur in this relation? In this manner the social scope of these sciences can be further defined.

Chapter I explains the necessity of empirical research into the functioning of the social sciences. Both outsiders and scientific researchers regularly complain about the unstable status of the social sciences. Supposedly these sciences have been going through a crisis for quite a long time: according to many people both the scientific achievements and the public influence of the social sciences leave much to be desired. The way in which all this is discussed, however, appears to be rather fruitless. Several analyses of this crisis show a persistent lack of theoretical consistency. Moreover, they are often restricted to internal scientific problems. The greatest impediment, however, to the discussion of the crisis in the social sciences is its strongly normative character. The crisis debate is above all a philosophical and methodological debate on principles in which rules for the correct practice of science are the main issue. Suggestions for improvement are based on normative ideals about science and have not been preceded by empirical research into the internal and external conditions under which these ideals can be realized. The result is an endless discussion and repetition of moves. Only historical research into the factual functioning of the social sciences can breathe new life into the crisis debate which has come to a deadlock.

This type of research too requires a theory, in this case a theory of science development. Chapter II therefore gives a survey of

existing theoretical and conceptual instruments for empirical research. These instruments, however, refer especially to the natural sciences whereas this study is a research into a branch of the social sciences. The first step, therefore, is to explain the special characteristics of the social sciences as compared with the natural sciences. This forms a basis on which to formulate a number of requirements which a theory of development of social science must fulfil. These minimum requirements are used as a standard for the assessment of a number of existing theories in the sociology of science on their usefulness for empirical research into the social sciences. This assessment clearly leads to a negative conclusion: the theories discussed do not, for various reasons, do sufficient justice to the specific problems encountered in the social sciences - problems which have to do with the discursive character of these sciences and which are a direct result of the afore-mentioned double bond between the social scientists and their object of study. In professional jargon: the problem of the 'double hermeneutic'.

Following in the footsteps of the doctor of medicine Ludwik Fleck and the sociologist Norbert Elias a new model of science development more appropriate to the social sciences is formulated in chapter III. In this historical-sociological model the development of knowledge is described in terms of conflicting thought styles which are supported by thought collectives which in their turn consist of an esoteric circle of experts and exoteric circles of interested laymen. Science forms part of this network of thought styles and thought collectives. The exact position of science within this network and any possible changes in that position can be analysed by examining the configuration of several types of bonds between and within esoteric and exoteric circles, respectively by examining the changes within this configuration. According to the model, such changes follow the pattern of increasing differentiation together with a rising level of integration. Changes in the configuration of bonds bring about changes in the scientific form and in the public function of the social sciences.

It appears that, by means of this model, the history of sociology of education in the Netherlands can be rewritten with surprising results. In chapter IV the developments in this field are described according to the standard procedures of disciplinary historiography. This offers the sociologist of science too an essential survey of the theoretical and empirical developments in scientific research into unequal educational opportunities. At the same time, however, it appears that a number of issues in the history of the sociological debate on education and inequality cannot be covered satisfactorily by such internal scientific historiography. These very issues can be dealt with much more satisfactorily by using the earlier expounded historical-sociological model of science development, as is done in chapter V.

This central chapter first gives a close analysis of the internal and external functioning of the 'Talentenproject'. Subsequently the

developments in the debate on unequal educational opportunities before and after the 'Talentenproject' are discussed - ever in terms of the Fleck/Elias model. This means that special attention is paid to the relationship between the debate on education and inequality on a socio-political level and on a scientific level. Due to the 'Talentenproject' the scientification of that debate has definitively taken shape. It now appears from the research into the social context of this project in the sixties and into the history of the political debate on education and inequality up to then that this scientification was founded on two social conditions: a) the general acceptance of the meritocratic thought style concerning education and inequality both within and outside science and b) the integration of educational research on a state level. These are the conditions which explain the scientific form and the public function of the 'Talentenproject'. When, in the seventies and the eighties, one of these conditions is no longer fulfilled - the meritocratic consensus evaporates due to political and cultural changes - this has far-reaching consequences both on the scientific research and the formation of theories concerning education and inequality, and on the role sociology of education plays in political and public discussions on the issue of unequal educational opportunities. The reason that the scientification of the debate on education and inequality is not nullified appears to relate to the lasting integration of educational research on the state level.

Finally, the results of research are summarized once again in chapter VI. In addition a few consequences in the fields of the philosophy and the policy of science are discussed. These consequences refer both to the question of the rationality of scientific knowledge and to problems concerning the relationship between science and society.

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